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Messenger Office, Easton, Pa.

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SERMON,

*PREACHED AT EASTON, PA.*

On Sunday, the 10th of January, 1841,

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BY

**Rev. John Gray, A. M.**

PASTOR OF THE FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN THE BOROUGH OF EASTON

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SIN AND SORROW

NECESSARILY CONNECTED IN THE DIVINE ADMINISTRATION.

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EASTON, JANUARY 10, 1841.

At a meeting of the friends of the Sabbath, held in the Presbyterian Church, at the conclusion of the Services, of the morning, THOMAS M'KEEN, Esq. being called to the chair, and *E. Green, and A. H. Reeder*, Esquires, appointed Secretaries,

It was resolved, That a copy of the Sermon this day delivered by our Pastor, the Rev, J. Gray, be respectfully solicited by this meeting, for immediate publication and dissemination.

DEAR SIR,—We have the honor, respectfully to submit, for your consideration, the foregoing Resolution, and earnestly to urge your compliance with the wishes of the meeting, which we represent.

Respectfully yours, &c.

THO. M'KEEN, *Chairman,*

E. GREEN,                    }  
A. H. REEDER,               } *Secretaries.*

To the Rev. J. GRAY.

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DEAR BRETHREN,—Though this Sermon was prepared *hastily*, on *Saturday evening*, and although I am conscious that its chief merit, consists in its adaptation to the peculiar circumstances and feelings of the people to whom it was delivered; yet, as the congregation, without leaving their pews, did so urgently and unanimously request it, and, what is still more, as its publication may, in the providence of God, be a starting point, from which may issue some effective effort for remedying the great evil, under which our state is labouring, I have come to the determination, though not without some reluctance, to make a sacrifice of personal and professional feeling, by complying with your kind request.

Yours in the bonds of the Gospel, &c.

J. GRAY.

Monday morning, Jan. 11. 1841.

To Th o. M'Keen, E. Green and A. H. Reeder, Esqs.

## SERMON.

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“ Yet they dealt proudly, and hearkened not unto thy commandments, but sinned against thy judgments.—

“ Nevertheless, for thy great mercies sake, thou didst not utterly consume them, nor forsake them ; for thou art a gracious and merciful God.”—*Nehemiah*, ix, 29th and 31st.

God's people were, at the time alluded to, in the text, in great tribulation. The Lord had put forth his hand, and they were afflicted. He had previously borne with them long ; greatly prospered them above all people, and they had used both this prosperity and this long-suffering goodness, to give point, and power, and prevalence to their rebellion. At length, God's forbearance became exhausted. He could no longer, in the dispensation of righteousness, withhold the rod. The promotion of his own glory required it—the perfecting of his holy purposes required it—and the eternal welfare of his own rebellious children required it ;—and in mercy, they were chastised,—sorely and grievously afflicted.

In the midst of this great affliction wherewith God did afflict them, they appointed a day of solemn fasting, during which they prayed, confessed their sins, and worshipped the Lord their God.” And in addition to this, they took a review of God's character, as manifested in his dealings towards them and their fathers, that in viewing their conduct towards him, in the light and levelness of his conduct towards them, they might be the more sensibly affected ; that they might see and know that the Lord reigneth ; that though “ clouds and darkness be round about him, righteousness and judgement are the habitation of his throne”—and that through the whole of his dispensation, towards them, he was ever rich in mercy to repentant sinners, while full of righteous indignation against impenitent rebels.



By this review, they saw, in the multitude of his mercies, a proof at once, of the amount of God's goodness, and their obligation; while in the number, and severity, and continuance of the judgments whereby they were afflicted, they had indubitable evidence, both of their own depravity, and God's displeasure.

Now brethren, that the Lord's mercies have been to us as abundant, while our return to Him, has been as full and foul as ever Israel's was, may be proved, beyond the possibility of plausible cavil, by a review of God's dealings towards us and our Fathers, ever since he led us over the great waters into this goodly land. Has he not wooed us by blessings, bigger and brighter, in many respects, than those with which he has privileged other people? Has he not enlarged and enriched us with a rapidity, and to a degree, beyond any thing which we find in the records of other nations? He met our fathers while they were afar on the wilderness of waters; he sojourned with them among the wilderness of woods and the haunts of heathens; he took them home into the house of his own heavenly care, and clothed them with salvation, and killed for them the fatted calf, and kept them, until, of the few and weary wanderers, he has made a great nation! Thus did he entail upon us a load of obligations; thus did he try to win us by the summer's sunshine and by the summer's reaping-time of his paternal providence and prosperity! But alas, like the cleansed Lepers, after we had taken and enjoyed all God's blessings, we went away in strange forgetfulness, giving room for him to say of us as Christ did of them, "were there not ten cleansed, but where are the nine?"

When we were not to be won to wisdom, God, as with his people of old, sent after us his judgements. When he failed in wooing he would compel us to come in by sterner, but not less salutary means; when the sunshine of prosperity only tempted us to stray farther and still farther from our Father's home, he sent down upon us the storm, and the tempest to drive us back for shelter. In pursuance of this providence he recently sent among us the wasting and withering pestilence by which thousands of our citizens were swept into eternity! More recently still he caused some of our chief cities, where, as if enshrined in a temple,

lay the idol of our national idolatry, *Wealth*, to be awfully and extensively ravaged by the devouring flame ;—immediately subsequent to, and partly consequent upon this, we became in a certain sense of the word, bankrupt, as a nation! After partially recovering from this, we became inoculated with the virus of speculation, amounting to universal and indiscriminate gambling, and the result was, a condition once more bordering on bankruptcy! This had not subsided, until the nation was thrown into a political conflict, in which wealth and character, truth and honesty, were expended and sacrificed with a lavish prodigality. Men of all ranks and professions,—persons of all shades of character,—the professed and needy politician, whose principle is his interest, and the professed follower of God, were found shoulder to shoulder, and hand in hand, in the excited and exciting conflict! The principle of brotherly kindness, charity and love, was as if by common consent, laid aside, and its action suspended. Neighbor reviled neighbor. Those who sat at the same communion table, and pledged themselves over the same sacred elements, to love each other, even as Christ loved them, went from that feast of love, and straightway, forgetting their principles, and oaths, and obligations, began to bite and devour each other! And thus the virus was communicated and diffused until all—yes all, with but few exceptions, became politically rabid. The very boys took the infection, and were all but as crazy as the men!—Nor was this even all, for a lying spirit seemed to take possession of them, as it erst did of the false prophets.—And this spirit was diffused, tolerated, supported and encouraged, until the one party generally, if not uniformly, maintained just the converse of the proposition maintained by the other, both as it regarded facts and opinions!—Nor was this even all, for the spirit of political gambling, was associated with the spirit of political lying, and most heartily did they cater for each others interests; and the Sabbath, as a consequence, was desecrated in a new, and peculiar manner; and families were divided, and variance, in some instances, produced. In a word, the unclean, and unblest thing, like the frogs of Egypt, crawled upon and over, the whole mass of society, in all its different relations

and ramifications, leaving the slime and filth of its pollution, to tell its progress.—Nor was this even all, for not only men, the pious and profane, the young and old ;—not only children too, forgetting their allegiance to age, and daring to rival their fathers in the exuberance of their excitement, but more, and worse than this, *she*, whose heart God made the home and temple of all lovely and loving emotions—*she* whose province, whose blessed province it is, next to Him of Calvary, to promote “ peace on earth, and good will to men ”—*she* whose glory it is to linger last and longest, where peace and love are crucified, and to be first in her witnessing and ministrations at their tomb and resurrection ;—even *she*, forgetting for a moment, that the majesty of her character, consists in preserving immaculate, the fine shade and edge of her sensibility,—forgetting that the glory of her character being, at once as delicate and beauteous as the trembling dew-drop, lit up by morning’s loveliest ray, may not be brushed with impunity, by the rude elements of political conflict ;—yes, even *she* gave herself up to the unhallowed excitement—outstripped, in some instances, the ruder sex, and was first to pluck and eat, thus proving that in the same ratio that she is more swift to perform deeds of love and mercy when moving in her proper orbit, is she more rapid in the opposite course, than man, when by any alien influence she is driven out of that orbit.

Well, the long-looked for period to this excitement came, and the result was announced. Did either party, as such, acknowledge the agency of God in that result ? Did the one come into his presence with gifts and thanksgiving and praise for the signal victory which they obtained ? Did the other come before him with devout acknowledgements that the Judge of all the earth will do right, and taking shame and confusion to themselves that on account of their sins God had in righteousness thus politically scourged them ? As far as either of them acted, as a party, to whom did they sacrifice ? To Baal, or to the God of Israel ?

In the midst of this agitation, in the monetary and political affairs of the nation, and while our public Journals were baiting and maddening the evil passions of the community, a series of awful and unparalleled outrages



against God, society and human nature were perpetrated, filling the whole land with dismay. Murders have been committed during the last few months, which for numbers and enormity, leave the records of fiction far in the rear. From the unnatural suicide, and the *fashionable murderer*, who does the work of human butchery *honourably*, and from *honourable motives*, up to the wretch who murders for revenge or gain, we have had a sad sample of the awful wickedness of the human heart, and a sad proof of the character of those judgements which result from God's letting us alone, and withholding his restraining grace.

But while we were looking on these manifestations of God's displeasure on others, lo! he has come into our own midst, and visited *us* with the tokens of his wrath. By a lavish expenditure of wealth, and the creation of an enormous debt, the people of this Commonwealth, without any party feature in the matter, have made extensive public improvements, by the construction of Canals and Rail-Roads. Our ablest political economists and financiers, supposed, that in addition to the immense value which these works would be to the state, in the increase of her comforts and wealth, they would soon afford an income which would pay the interest on the capital invested; and in process of time, and that not very distant, even liquidate the capital itself. But what has been the result, after years of trial? Why, that God, in his providence, has baffled the attempt to procure such a revenue. We have not only been unable to perfect what we have contemplated and commenced, but have failed even to some extent in keeping up what we have finished. Year after year the state is scourged and impoverished in this matter, insomuch that our abortive attempts remind us of those which were made to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem, by Julian the apostate.

This annual scourge has come again, and earlier and fiercer than upon any former year, and our town and county, if not the wole state, is this moment in mourning.\*

\* The amount of the destruction caused by the flood on this occasion, is far beyond what has ever occurred in this part of the county in the recollection of the oldest inhabitants. The Delaware was on last Friday, (Jan. 8th,) 35 feet above low water mark.

God only knows how many millions we are poorer than we were four days ago. Many of our citizens are in deep distress. Some are burying their dead—some are vainly searching for the corpse of a dear child or parent; many have lost a large part of their substance, while some have lost their all.

That these are chastisements, solemn and righteous, though no doubt kind and paternal chastisements, we think no mind is either so dark or insane as to deny. Do afflictions come from the dust? Is there a *peradventure* in the doings of God? That we are suffering we know—because we see and feel it—that they come from God we both know and acknowledge; yea, and do even rejoice in it, for he who afflicts can also heal. If this be so, would it not be wise to inquire why God ever afflicts any, and why he now afflicts us?

Does it give God any pleasure to afflict his people? Does he ever do it without an adequate cause? and if not, then where shall we look for this cause? Is it not sin? Is Sin not the cause of sorrow? and the removal of this sin the end of that sorrow? God then has a controversy with us because of our sin, and to remove this cause of his righteous displeasure he has afflicted us. No man will deny that judgements are the results of God's decisions on the conduct of sinners, seeing that since the beginning, SIN AND SORROW have ever and invariably followed each other as cause and effect. This, we apprehend, flows necessarily from the constitution which God has imposed upon his creation; and, if viewed right, exhibits most clearly, as all his acts do, that he is abundant in holiness, goodness and truth. See, too, with what amazing and beautiful regularity God proceeds in the production of all his purposes. Look at yonder moon, with what mathematical accuracy she comes and goes;—look at that sun which for upwards of six thousand years never disappointed the world one day, or hour, or moment! What a stable and brilliant and daily miracle! What an unanswerable attestation to the goodness and power of Almighty God! And yet this unerring and beautiful regularity has a tendency, in a sinful world like ours, to lull the conscience into security, insomuch that it requires some calamity, some fearful and unwonted provi-

dence to awake us to a realizing sense of our condition and danger. Nations, like individuals, feel that notwithstanding all that is said of sin, that to-day is as yesterday and yesterday was as the day which preceeded it, and thus on and on would they go in sinful security, did not some unusual convulsion—some strange providence—some unwonted strife of the elements, startle us to look down upon the precipice which we are nearing. Thus it was in Egypt when God aroused them by a succession of terrible and unwonted plagues; and thus, too, God aroused and informed the Israelits, both in the wilderness and Canaan, of their distinct offences, by the various punishments with which he afflicted them; and all this was for the destruction of sin and not of his people. So also is it with us. We have sinned, and our transgressions arise like a black column to the heavens, conducting up the spirit and character of our conduct, while at the same time they bring down into our bosom the wrath of God, for the prevention and destruction of those sins. For, that we have sinned; and that on account of those, the displeasure of God is upon us; and that the recent calamity which has swept over this country, is a proof, as well as an effect and punishment of our sin, are truths, against which, a wise man cannot shut his eyes, and a good man will not.

Inasmuch then as we cannot expect, nor indeed should we desire the removal of those calamities till they have accomplished the end for which they have been sent, we should diligently inquire what *effect* they have produced upon us?

These chastisements call us to repentance, and exhort us as individuals and as a community to turn from every evil work and way. But what change has, as yet, been produced among us? What change has even been projected? Is not every kind of reform talked of, except that which is at once most imperative and most important—a reform of our lives and hearts? We speak of a reform in the administration of government—of a reform in commerce—of a reform, in a word, in every thing except in the morals of society. Instead of a reform in our hearts and lives, is not dissipation as prevalent as ever, if not on the increase amongst us? I speak not merely of that kind of dissipation which is gross and hideous,



but of that spirit of worldliness and folly by which God is banished from the heart ; of that regardlessness, which so extensively prevails, of God's approbation or disapprobation ; of that growing disposition to lower the standard of moral obligation, both among christians and men of the world ; of that lamentable lack of christian love among the professed followers of the Lamb ; of that disposition among the members of the church, to go just as far with the world as they can, and when public opinion requires them to stop, permitting those under their control to go the remainder of the way ; of that indiscriminate use of means, no matter how questionable, provided the desired end is likely to be accomplished ; of that disposition, even among christians, to make use of the sabbath day for travelling, upon pretences which we think are not justifiable upon broad christian principles ; of that itch for gain—that inordinate haste to become rich, evinced by sabbath *selling*, and that regardlessness of the divine displeasure evinced by sabbath *buying* ! Are these things not so ? Do they not prevail extensively, and by prevailing do they not manifest a great lack of christian principle, as well as afford sufficient reasons, why a Father who loves us and loves holiness, and desires our salvation, should afflict us ? And so long as these things continue, would it be right ?—would it be desirable, that God should let us alone ? If I saw your house in the dead hour of night on fire, while you and your children were locked up in the embrace of sleep, would it be right or desirable to let you alone and pass by ? If then God afflicts not without cause, and if sin be the ground of the controversy which he has with us, and if it be for the removal of that sin that he afflicts us, would it be right or desirable that he should lift his hand before he accomplishes the end ? If he loves us will he do it ? If we love ourselves, and have wisdom enough to know what is our chief good, will we ask him to do it ? Surely none but a child or an idiot, or one in a state of intoxication, would desire to be let alone in the midst of danger. Such a desire would not be indicative of either philosophy or christianity.

What effects, then, have God's judgements produced upon us as a nation, a commonwealth, a borough, or individuals ? This is a grave question, and should be seri-



ously and dispassionately pondered. The wicked or the weak-minded may dispose of it by an ebullition of passion and a tirade of denunciation, but the man of worth and wisdom will deem it a legitimate subject for christian and philosophic investigation. The true patriot, whose mind is under the expansive and enlightening influence of truth, cannot see his country suffering under the afflictive dispensations of God, without inquiring diligently into the cause, that he may apply the remedy. Herein differs the man of worth, from the man of words--the frothy, noisy, selfish, narrow-minded partisan, from the cool, deliberate, high-minded patriot. How then is it with us as *a nation*? Are we not a Sabbath-breaking nation, who in despite of God's express command, and in despite of the remonstrance of God's people, and that too, after deliberately reviewing the subject, have publicly, before heaven and earth, determined to oppose him in this important matter. God's own words are, "verily, my sabbath ye shall keep;—six days may work be done, but in the seventh is the sabbath of rest, holy to the Lord." The nation, after mature deliberation, answers, and that too by the strong language of her actions, "we will not keep thy sabbath;—six days shall we work, and the seventh, as far as we are concerned, shall not be a sabbath of rest holy to the Lord!" If then the nation has thus thrown down the gauntlet, and dared God to his face, is it strange that we have felt his judgements? or rather would it not have been at once more strange and deplorable if we did not, seeing that such would be a conclusive proof, that like Ephraim of old, God had determined to let us alone?

How is it with us as *a State*? The moment that this Commonwealth had completed her extensive and magnificent works, so far as to be able to make any use of them, God in a voice audible and intelligible said, "Remember the sabbath day to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work. But the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God; in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy man servant, nor thy maid servant, nor thy cattle, nor the stranger that is within thy gates." What was the indignant reply of Pennsylvania to this mandate of heaven? You may hear it every sabbath along the whole length

of her canals and rail-ways, in the noise and bustle incident to such works. You may read it in the singular and astounding fact, that this Commonwealth is so madly bent upon opposition to God in this matter, that in order to accomplish it, she actually bribes her own citizens to break her own laws, that she may thereby break the laws of God! On our own statute book there exists a law for the protection of the Sabbath, in exact conformity with the command of God; this law every citizen is morally and legally bound to obey.\* Can it be believed then, that the law-making and the law-enforcing power steps forward, and not only offers to shield the citizen to trample upon her laws, and upon the laws of God, and upon the dictates of his own conscience, and to forego all the high moral and intellectual advantage which results from obedience; and to minister towards bringing down upon himself and his country, the wrath of God, but more than this, that she actually bribes him to do it!

There is involved in our conduct, as a State, the same principle which was the immediate cause of the glorious reformation from Popery, viz: that which led to the public sale of indulgencies, to break both the law of God and the power granting the indulgencies, for a given sum! Nothing perhaps, in all history, is at once more villainous or more villainously regarded, than the conduct of the Pope† in commissioning Tetzel to go forth in his name, to raise a revenue by selling permission to sin. It roused the world against him then, and it still calls forth the unqualified maledictions of all that are intelligent and hon-

\* See Act of 22d April 1794, Sect. 1. "If any person shall do or perform any worldly employment or business whatsoever on the Lord's day, commonly called Sunday, works of necessity and charity excepted, or shall use or practice any unlawful game, hunting, shooting, sport or diversion whatsoever, on the same day, and be convicted thereof, every such person, so offending, shall for every such offence forfeit and pay four dollars, to be levied by distress, &c. &c."

† John Tetzel, a Dominican monk, was chosen by Albert, Archbishop of Mentz and Magdeburg, to preach and proclaim in Germany, these famous indulgences of Pope Leo X. which administered the remission of all sins, past, present, and to come, however enormous their nature, to those who were rich enough to purchase them. In describing the efficacy of those indulgencies, Tetzel said, among other enormities, that "even had any one ravished the mother of God, he, Tetzel, had wherewithal to efface his guilt," nay, that "he had saved more souls from hell, by these indulgencies, than St. Peter had converted to Christianity by his preaching."

Luther, in 94 propositions, maintained publicly at Wittenberg, on Sep. 30, 1517, censured the extravagant extortion of these questors, and plainly pointed out the Roman Pontiff, as a partaker of their guilt, since he suffered the people to be seduced by such delusions. This was the commencement of that memorable rupture and revolution in the church, which humbled the grandeur of the lordly Pontiffs, and eclipsed so great a part of their glory.—[Nosheim's Ecclesiastical History, vol. iii.]

est in all the earth. But what better is the State of Pennsylvania? or wherein does she essentially differ in principle or conduct from the Pope of Rome? Does she not undertake, for the purpose of raising revenue to grant indulgences, to transgress what she acknowledges to be the law of God, as well as what she declares to be a part of her own common law? Nay, does she not undertake to replenish her treasury by selling licences to break her own laws, framed as she believes them to be, on the principles of christianity, which she declares to be a part of her common law? Does she not actually employ men as the Pope did Tetzels, to sell these indulgencies every sunday for a given sum? And will not any citizen who refuses to be a Tetzels and whose conscience will not permit him either to break the law of his God and country himself, or assist others in doing it, be actually disfranchised as far as many of the offices and emoluments connected with our public works are concerned?

Here then commences a contest:—God commands, the State not only refuses compliance, but commits moral perjury, that she may refuse! Well, what is the result? Why God sweeps these works;—we repair them again at a great expense; God again sweeps them;—we again reconstruct them at a still greater expense:—God again sweeps them, and thus he annually destroys them to such an extent, that it requires not only our *sabbath gains*, but in addition our week day gains to repair them! If I am correctly informed, our state improvements, taken in the mass, have not produced in all, a revenue almost if any thing greater than what was required to repair the desolations, which God in his providence has annually occasioned. Here, then, is the pride and darling object of our state, which has loaded us with a debt of many millions, and so far from liquidating any part of that debt, or even paying the interest upon it, is actually increasing that debt every day! And now God has once more come upon us in great wrath, leaving it as yet, doubtful, whether these works are not entirely destroyed, at least so far, as to require an additional debt to make them again available! In the principles of inductive philosophy, can we refrain from seeing in this, the *effect*, of which sin is the *cause*? And if so, are we not alarmed at the fearful extent to which our sins are taxing us?



Now Brethren, if these things be so,—and if there be truth in the word of God;—if in the moral, as in the material world, the natural result may be predicated of the adequate cause, then we do most honestly believe, that without a change of our policy and conduct, it is worse than useless to add millions to our debts, in order to prepare our works for another destructive visitation! for God says, upon every chastisement that he gives us, “If ye will not be reformed by me by these things, but will walk contrary unto me, then will I also walk contrary unto you, and will punish you.” Can we then, as a Christian Commonwealth, expect success in an undertaking, when that success pre-supposes, indeed makes it necessary, that God should belie himself? Let us then cease, from the unnatural and unequal contest. God does not deserve it at our hands;—love forbids it, duty forbids it, policy and wisdom forbid it.

This may be called the temporal, or the *dollar and cent* view of the subject. But I need not remind you, that there is another, and a higher, and a more important view, in which we are called upon to contemplate it. In this world, God punishes nations and communities, in their associated capacities. But in the future world, he punishes them as individuals, and that for their individual sins. On this subject, we have neither room nor excuse for mistake, for God has told us so; and if we believe him not, the sin of making him a liar, will not be received in lieu of punishment for other sins, in the great day of retribution. See how deeply, then, we are interested in the great duty of submitting to God. As individuals, we assist in composing the nation, and our individual sins in making up the mass of the national criminality. For these we must suffer *here*, in our national capacity. But more, far more than this, we must “all appear before the judgment seat, to give an account of the deeds done in the body, whether they have been good or bad.” Although the temporal and earthly judgements which we now see, are frequently hard and heavy;—although poverty, and agony of mind and body, and the destruction of fondly cherished hopes, are difficult to bear; yet even these, in their direct forms, are as nothing, in comparison with those eternal judgements with which the impenitent sinner will be visited beyond the grave! Oh! “who can



“dwell with everlasting burnings?” Who can bear the ceaseless gnawings of the worm of remorse, which will fasten on the sinner’s soul at death, and there glut itself upon his undying agonies, to all eternity !

How deeply then are we interested in the promotion of holiness ! It has a claim upon us as *patriots*, and if sin be a disgrace and the source of destruction to the nation, no immoral man has a legitimate title to the high appellation of patriot ;—And it has a claim upon us as *citizens*, for our national prosperity is involved in it ;—and it has a claim upon our common interests in all our relations in life, but more and greater even than all these, it has a claim upon our individual hopes and happiness throughout all eternity !

Our position then is, standing as we now do, in the midst of the ruins and calamities of God’s judgements upon us, that as God does not afflict *willingly*, nor without *cause* ;—and as *sin* and *sorrow* are in the divine constitution of the world and of man, as well as in the experience of our race for six thousand years, to be regarded as bearing the relation toward each other of *cause* and *effect*, that we as *individuals*, as a *town*, and as a *commonwealth*, are greatly guilty before the Lord, and here, in the vast destruction of property, and in the vast accumulation of misery which God has suddenly and unexpectedly brought upon us is the proof of it. As this is a delicate as well as a solemn subject, I desire not to be misunderstood. I do not say, nor even think, that this State, or this town, or the individuals more particularly afflicted in family or estate, are more guilty before God than any other state or community or individuals. It is enough if we be only as bad ; nay, if we be only sinners. The first question then is, *Ought any thing to be done ?* Surely, if an accursed thing be in the midst of us, for which we are afflicted, it ought to be put away ; both duty and policy dictate the propriety and even necessity of such a course. Ought any thing to be done ? Ask the man whose property is in danger, whether any thing ought to be done to preserve it ? Ask the man whose life is in danger, whether any thing should be done to preserve it ? Ask the king which is invaded by an enemy whether any thing ought to be done to deliver it ?

The next question is, *Can any thing be done ?* Did you

not see during the recent flood our merchants removing their goods from their endangered storehouses? And our fellow citizens carrying away their furniture? Let us only be as wise in the moral as we are in the material world, and in place of folding up our hands and uttering vain lamentations and crying can any thing be done?—Let us arise and make the attempt. Can we not in the spirit of kind and affectionate faithfulness go to our mistaken fellow citizens, who make merchandise on God's holy day, and solicit them not to labor to bring down the curse of God upon themselves, and the place from whence they derive their support? Can we not go, and in respectful solicitude, ask our fellow citizens who compose the Council of this Borough, to give us their aid in stemming the destructive torrent of Sabbath desecration? Can we not, in decorous, but expressive language, and in a Christian spirit, ask the Legislature, no longer to assume the attitude of opposition to God?—no longer to exhibit the singular and forbidding phenomenon of a law-making power, so anxious to be the breaker of their own laws, as to give a premium, even in the exhausted state of their finances, to accomplish it? Can we not go, and respectfully, and in the language of freemen, ask them not to *tax us to do a thing, which not only our conscience but the laws both of God and the Commonwealth declare to be wrong and unconstitutional*? Can we not plead with them, in the name of their own servants whom they employ, not to treat them with less compassion, than the slave-master does those who are in his employment? Are those whom the State hires, not men, and free men? Have they not souls, which require the moral cultivation of the Sabbath, and of the means of grace?—And shall we, seeing and knowing this, be taxed to chain these men down to their bitter doom?—to incarcerate them, as we were, soul and body, in a dungeon, upon which no Sabbath's sun ever shines? Must we raise up a generation by law, to be opposed to law? ignorant, vicious Sabbath-breakers, which must be the case with those poor boys who work on our canals seven days in the week, and owing to the cupidity or negligence of those having them in charge, will be doomed to this state of mental and bodily bondage, as long as we use our public work on the holy and honourable day of the Lord? Can we

solicit our Legislature, to look into the wisdom and the kindness of this matter?—to examine its policy and *constitutionality*?—to reflect on the fearful consequences, which for time and eternity, hang around it; and the awful responsibilities which rest upon those to whom God and the people have committed this public trust?\*

Now Brethren, I have spoken my mind to you freely, upon subjects of vast importance to us, as individuals, as well as a community, and I have done it without fear on the one hand or partiality on the other. And yet after all, some may be disposed to say, that nothing can be done—nay, that every effort to rescue the sabbath from public profanation, has not only been abortive, but has thrown obloquy upon those who attempted it. But are any, or all of these, sufficient reasons, why christian free-men should stand by and give the constructive approval, even of their apathy, to what they know to be wrong? Are these sufficient reasons why enlightened patriots and philanthropists should aid, even by their silence, a system calculated to sap the foundation of all our boasted and blood bought liberties? He is a craven, and may not be depended on in the day of danger or at the post of peril, who is driven aside from high moral duty by such paltry considerations as these. Every man has a twofold responsibility resting upon him, first as it regards his *social*, and second as it regards his *personal* conduct and duties, from neither of which, a man of high moral courage will, or a man of high christian principle can, be driven, by the empty sound of the empty headed, or the malignant sneer of the profane, the interested, or the unprincipled demagogue—a good man will not deter him, and a bad one, cannot!

But suppose we do fail, in the attempt to bless our country and to glorify our God, let us recollect, not only that such a failure, would be a distinction of no mean value to a sanctified ambition, but that even the attempt

\* A boy driving on one of our canals, passing a large mercantile and milling establishment, inquired if any thing was the matter with either of the proprietors or their families. On being questioned why he asked such a question, he answered, "because their mill and store are both closed;" and when told that it was the *Sabbath day*, he seemed awakened to the consciousness of a once familiar idea, and drove on. Poor little fellow, without any fault of his own, but through the cupidity of his employers, and the practical infidelity of the state, he was brought up in a darkness as gross as Paganism, though surrounded by the broad day-light of Christianity! Can this come to good, even as it regards the social and political compact?



will clear our own skirts, and so far, prepare us for that great day, when our *personal* character will pass in review before our God and our race. Will any man, on that day, regret any attempt, which he may have made in the cause of virtue? Will the "good and faithful servant," as he then hears the words, "well done," from the lips of the Judge, regret any effort which he ever put forth, for the honor of God or the good of man, even though it failed and recoiled in scorn and obloquy upon his own head? Or will the unfaithful servant, when the soul riving sentence, "depart from me, I never knew you," pierces his heart, feel a counterbalancing consolation in the remembrance that he either practised or countenanced or refrained from restraining vice, because it was popular in his day, and that to have done otherwise would have subjected him to the reproach of sinners? But, brethren, even here, in our present life and lot, virtue receives no mean or uncertain reward. Even here, what, with the consciousness of having attempted to do what was right, and the providential allotments, which in some way, ever and anon follow the honest attempts, we are abundantly repaid. And when, to all this you add the approval of conscience in a dying hour, and the approval of God in the judgement day, and the unutterable glories of a saved soul through a blest eternity—when all this is taken into view, will any man say that *nothing* can be done? That the attempt will prove abortive, and therefore *useless*? What! *Nothing can be done!* Yes, immortal soul, something can be done, for if by the performance of your individual duty, you clear your own skirts and minister to your own salvation; more, infinitely more, will be done than all the angelic intelligencies in heaven can estimate, short of Him who knows the value of a soul, the measure of whose existence, is the eternity, of its God! Yes! *something can be done*, and something infinitely more valuable too, than all the inhabitants of the world of light can estimate, short of Him who knows the amount of knowledge that can be obtained, and the measure of blessedness that can be enjoyed, and the height of glory which can be reached, by a soul taught of God and feasted by God, and attracted upward too God, during the cycle of everlasting ages!